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DOCTOR STRANGE



Once he was a man like most others—a worldly man, seduced and jaded by material things. But then he discovered the separate reality, where sorcery and men's souls shaped the forces that shape our lives. In that instant, he was born again, to become a man like no other!

Stan Lee PRESENTs: Dr. STRANGE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS!™

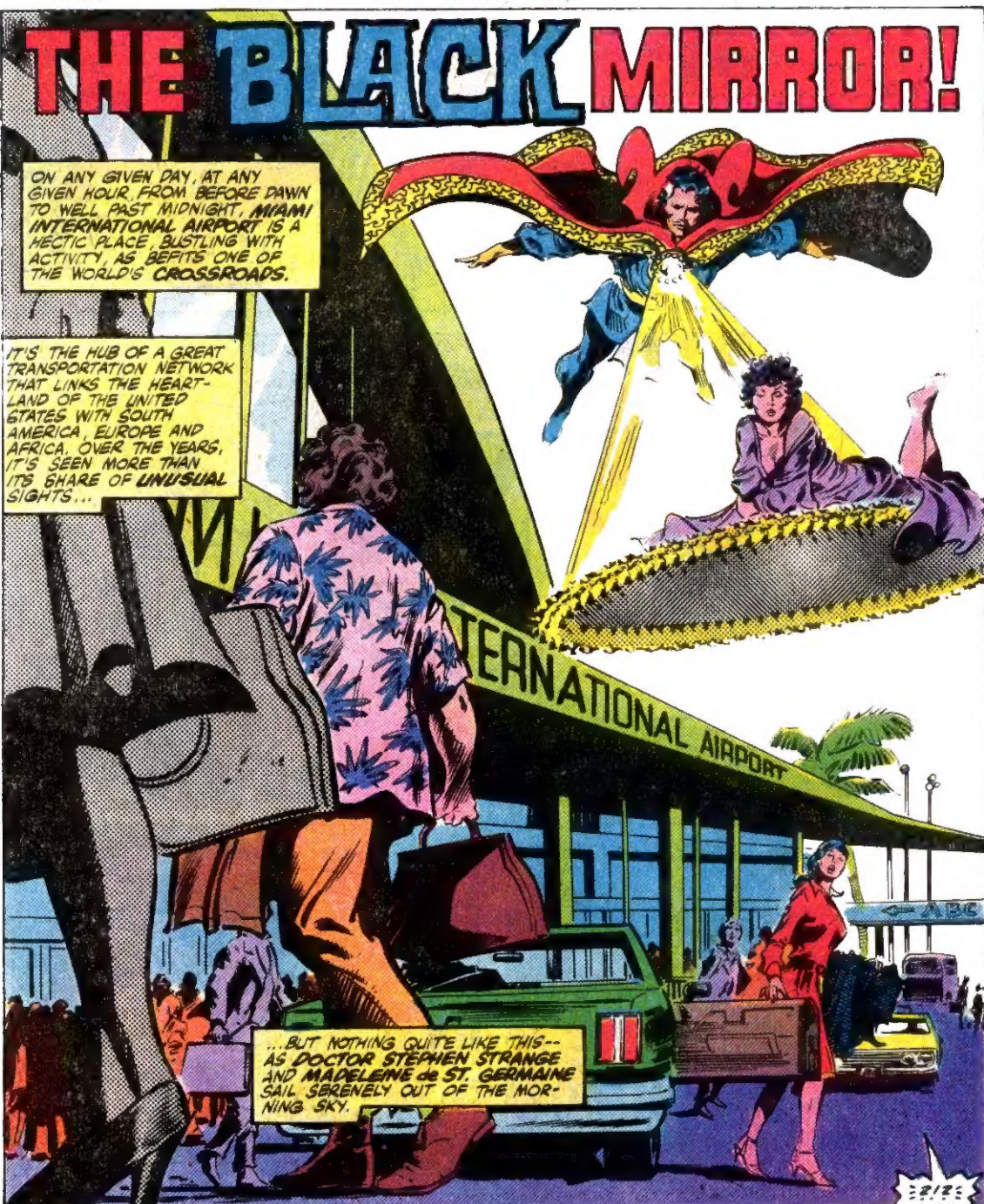
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THE BLACK MIRROR!

ON ANY GIVEN DAY, AT ANY GIVEN HOUR, FROM BEFORE DAWN TO WELL PAST MIDNIGHT, MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT IS A HECTIC PLACE, BUSTLING WITH ACTIVITY, AS BEFITS ONE OF THE WORLD'S CROSSROADS.

IT'S THE HUB OF A GREAT TRANSPORTATION NETWORK THAT LINKS THE HEARTLAND OF THE UNITED STATES WITH SOUTH AMERICA, EUROPE AND AFRICA. OVER THE YEARS, IT'S SEEN MORE THAN ITS SHARE OF UNUSUAL SIGHTS...

...BUT NOTHING QUITE LIKE THIS—
AS DOCTOR STEPHEN STRANGE
AND MADELEINE DE ST. GERMAINE
SAIL SERENELY OUT OF THE MORNING SKY.



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HOURS AGO, THE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS WAS FIGHTING FOR MADELEINE'S LIFE-- AND THE LIVES OF ALL HUMANITY-- AGAINST HIS ARCH-FOE, BARON MORDO. WITH THE HELP OF THE MACABRE MAN-THING, DR. STRANGE WON... *

... AND NOW, GENTLEMAN THAT HE IS, HE'S SEEING HIS COMPANION HOME.

WSEE LAST 15H-- 30.

I FEAR OUR ENTRANCE WILL CREATE A STIR, MON CHER-- HOW WILL WE EXPLAIN IT?

WE WILL EXPLAIN NOTHING THERE IS NO NEED.

THE MAGE GESTURES...



... AND THE TWO OF THEM ARE ENVELOPED BY A SHOWER OF IRIDESCENT SPARKLES...

OH!

MOMENTS LATER, WHEN THE LIGHT-SHOW FADES...

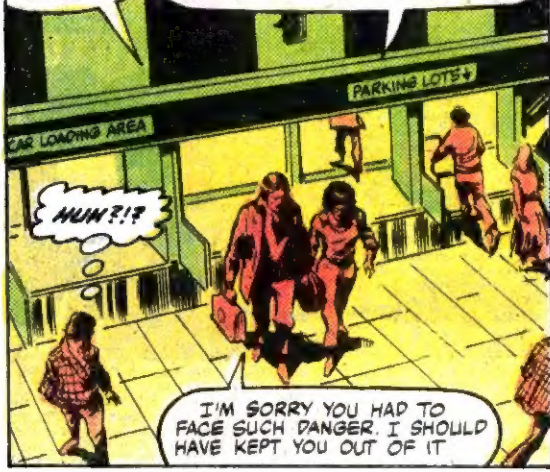


STEPHEN-- C'EST MANIFIQUE!

A USEFUL SPELL-- IT NOT ONLY CHANGES OUR APPEARANCE, BUT CASTS AN AURA OF DOUBT INTO THE MINDS OF THOSE WHO SAW US LAND

THEY NOW BELIEVE THEY WERE SEEING THINGS.

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE WE ARRIVED IN MIAMI ONLY YESTERDAY. THIS IS SUCH A PROSAIC, NORMAL ENDING TO OUR FANTASTIC ADVENTURE.



HUH?!

I'M SORRY YOU HAD TO FACE SUCH DANGER. I SHOULD HAVE KEPT YOU OUT OF IT

YOU NEEDED MY HELP. I GAVE IT FREELY.

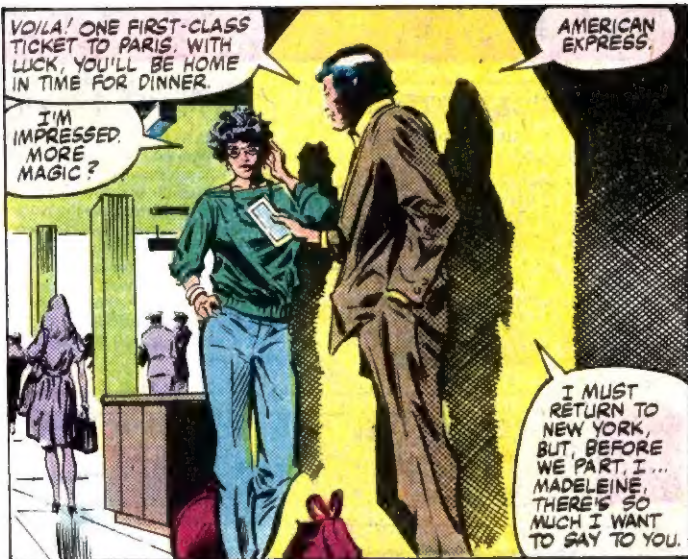
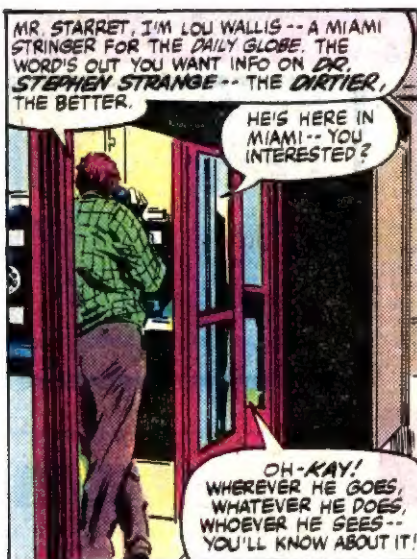
I REGRET NOTHING.



THAT MAN-- THAT'S DOCTOR STRANGE!

EXCEPT THE MOMENT TO COME-- WHEN WE MUST PART!

I'D BETTER TELL STARRETT!



IT'S EARLY EVENING WHEN A TAXI SWINGS OFF 72ND AVENUE ONTO BLEECKER STREET IN THE HEART OF NEW YORK'S FAMED GREENWICH VILLAGE, AFTER A LONG, GRUELING DRIVE IN FROM LAGUARDIA AIR-PORT.

THE CAB PULLS TO A STOP IN FRONT OF A VENERABLE OLD MANSION.

THE LONE PASSENGER ALIGHTS, AND A PAIR OF CAMERAMEN HIDING IN AN UPPER-FLOOR APARTMENT DIRECTLY ACROSS THE STREET, MOVE INTO ACTION!

THERE HE IS! START SHOOTING!

I WONDER WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT!

STARRETT WANTS US TO PHOTOGRAPH *EVERYONE* WHO VISITS THAT HOUSE AT ANY HOUR OF THE DAY OR NIGHT.

TOO BAD I COULDN'T GET INSIDE TO PLANT SOME *MICROPHONES*, LIKE HE WANTED.

I BET WE COULDN'T GOTTEN SOME JUICY TAPES.

UNAWARE THAT HE'S BEEN UNDER SURVEILLANCE SINCE HE ARRIVED AT MIAMI AIRPORT, A WEARY DR. STRANGE SURVEYS THE SILENT, EMPTY STREET AND *SMILES*. FOR TOO MUCH OF HIS LIFE, HE WAS A WANDERER, BUT NOW, THIS HOUSE, THIS NEIGHBORHOOD, IS HOME!

HERE HE FINDS PEACE. HERE, HE FEELS SAFE.

32 → 32A

33 → 33A

SOON, THE MAGE WILL LEARN THAT HIS SAFETY IS AN *ILLUSION*!

HELLO, STARRETT? GILLIS HERE. DOC STRANGE IS HOME...

AND, AS DR. STRANGE ENTERS THE INVIOLEATE FASTNESS OF HIS SANCTUM SANCTORUM, HE FINDS, TO HIS SURPRISE, THAT THINGS ARE NOT QUITE AS HE LEFT THEM.

WHAT A MESS!

THERE ARE EMPTY FOOD CONTAINERS ALL OVER MY STUDY.

AND HERE, I THINK, IS THE CULPRIT...

...SARA WOLFE, MY NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOR-- ASLEEP...

I SHOULD BE USED TO THIS BY NOW-- SOLVING ONE MYSTERY TO FACE ANOTHER...

...AND WEARING MY DISCIPLE, CLEA'S COSTUME FROM THE LOOKS OF THINGS, SHE'S BEEN HERE A WHILE.

I'LL HAVE TO INTERROGATE SARA...

"...LATER."

TIME PASSES...

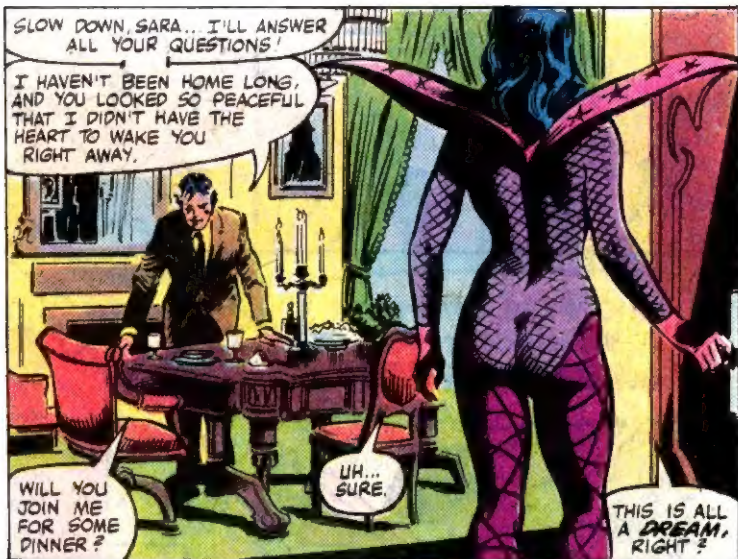
...FILLING THE ROOM WITH LIGHT AND WARMTH.

MMM MMMM...

RESPONDING TO THE FIRES CARESS, SARA WAKES.

GOOD EVENING, SARA.

...AND A HEARTH THAT WAS COLD AND CHOKED WITH ASHES NOW BURNS MERRILY...



IT BEGAN THE DAY
YOU LEFT FOR
EUROPE.

I WAS
DOWNTOWN
ON A JOB
INTERVIEW...

... HEADING
FOR THE CHINATOWN
SUBWAY WHEN CLEA
RAN RIGHT INTO
ME...

"I THOUGHT IT
WAS BECAUSE
SOME STREET
PUNKS WERE
AFTER HER..."

"...BUT LATER, HERE, SHE EXPLAINED THAT
SHE WAS REALLY FLEEING FROM SOME SORT
OF DEMON **WRAITHS**. THEY WERE ALL
AROUND THE HOUSE, PREVENTING HER FROM
SEARCHING FOR YOUR MISSING SERVANT,
WONG."

"SHE'D TRIED TO
CONTACT YOU,
MYSTICALLY, BUT
SHE COULDN'T
GET THROUGH."

"SHE ASKED MY HELP. I GAVE IT-- WITHOUT THINKING TWICE,
THOUGH I'M STILL NOT SURE WHY."

"CLEA CAST A SPELL
THAT TEMPORARILY
SWITCHED OUR
BODIES. AFTER WE
CHANGED CLOTHES,
WE'D HAVE FOOLED
ANYONE. I WAS **HER**
AND SHE WAS **ME**."

"THEN SHE EXPLAINED HER PLAN..."

SARA, I'VE TRACED WONG TO UP-
STATE NEW YORK. THAT'S WHERE
I'M GOING. I'LL CHECK IN
REGULARLY AND TELL YOU WHAT
I'VE LEARNED-- SO YOU CAN
PASS IT ON TO STEPHEN."

"WHEN I AWOKE THE NEXT
MORNING I HAD MY OWN
BODY BACK."

"CLEA NEVER CALLED. I'VE
BEEN WAITING FOR HER EVER
SINCE, HOPING TO HEAR FROM
HER."

*FLASHBACK COURTESY OF
DS #S 38-40 -- JO

SO SINCE I WAS STUCK HERE,
WITH NOTHING TO DO AND
LOTS OF TIME ON MY HANDS, I
DECIDED TO MAKE MYSELF
USEFUL.

I BEGAN
BY TIDYING
YOUR DESK.



STRANGE SPENDS THE REST OF THE NIGHT IN SLEEP-- THEN IN MEDITATION.



IN THE MORNING, HIS BODY RESTED AND HIS MIND CLEAR, HE IS READY TO ACT.

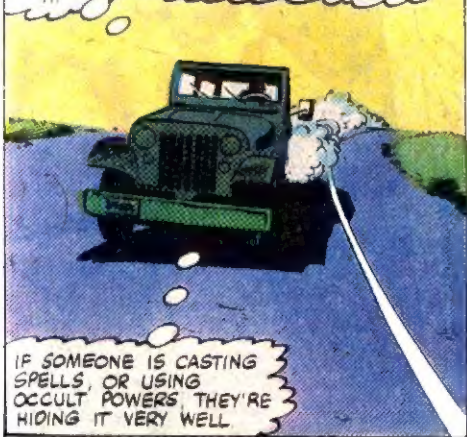
BY MID-AFTERNOON, HE HAS FOLLOWED CLEA'S TRAIL NORTHWARDS 200 MILES FROM NEW YORK CITY, TO A MAGNIFICENT MANSION BUILT DEEP IN THE REMOTE FASTNESS OF THE ADIRONDACK FOREST PRESERVE.



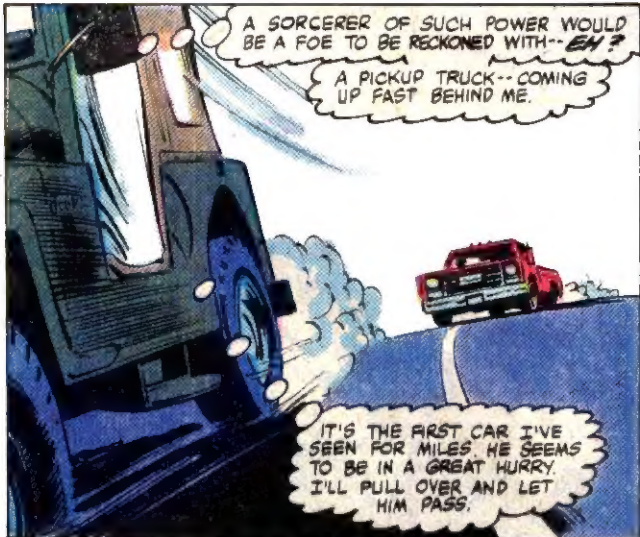
NO SIGN OF LIFE.

THE PEOPLE IN TOWN SAID THIS PLACE HAS BEEN EMPTY FOR YEARS.

YET CLEA'S PSYCHIC TRAIL LEADS RIGHT TO IT. I'VE BEEN ON THE ALERT FOR ANY MYSTIC ACTIVITY SINCE I ENTERED THIS VALLEY, BUT I'VE SENSED NOTHING.



IF SOMEONE IS CASTING SPELLS, OR USING OCCULT POWERS, THEY'RE HIDING IT VERY WELL.

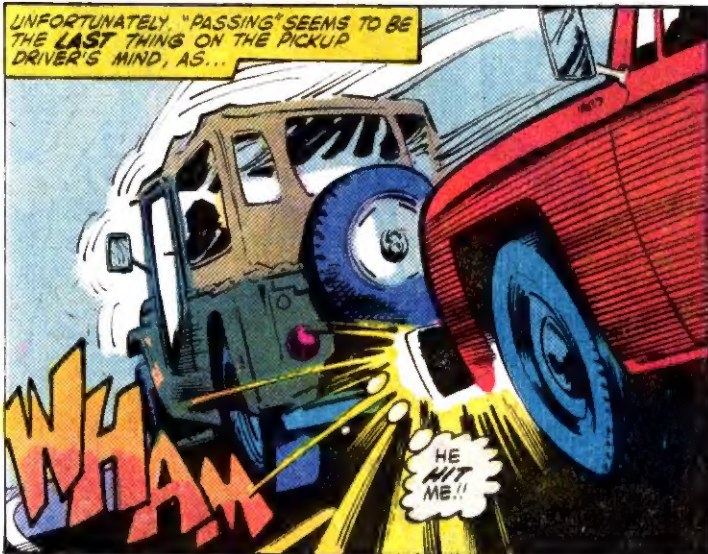


A SORCERER OF SUCH POWER WOULD BE A FOE TO BE RECKONED WITH-- EN?

A PICKUP TRUCK-- COMING UP FAST BEHIND ME.

IT'S THE FIRST CAR I'VE SEEN FOR MILES. HE SEEMS TO BE IN A GREAT HURRY. I'LL PULL OVER AND LET HIM PASS.

UNFORTUNATELY, "PASSING" SEEMS TO BE THE LAST THING ON THE PICKUP DRIVER'S MIND, AS...



HE HIT ME!!



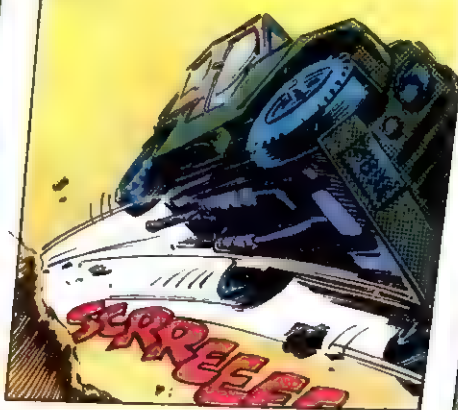
THAT WAS DELIBERATE!

THE TRUCK'S TRYING TO RUN ME OFF THE ROAD!

AGAIN AND AGAIN, THE PICKUP
RAMS STRANGE'S JEEP...



... THE MAGE FIGHTING DESPERATELY FOR
CONTROL OF HIS CAR AS IT SLUES
ACROSS THE STEEP WINDING MOUNTAIN
ROAD...



... AND
OUT INTO
SPACE



WHY MUST WE
GO TO ALL THIS
TROUBLE,
CHOU?

HE IS ALSO **SORCERER
SUPREME**--AND OUR
ORDERS ARE TO MAKE
CERTAIN

NO ONE
COULD HAVE
SURVIVED
SUCH A
CRASH-- THE
ROUND-EYE
IS DEAD!



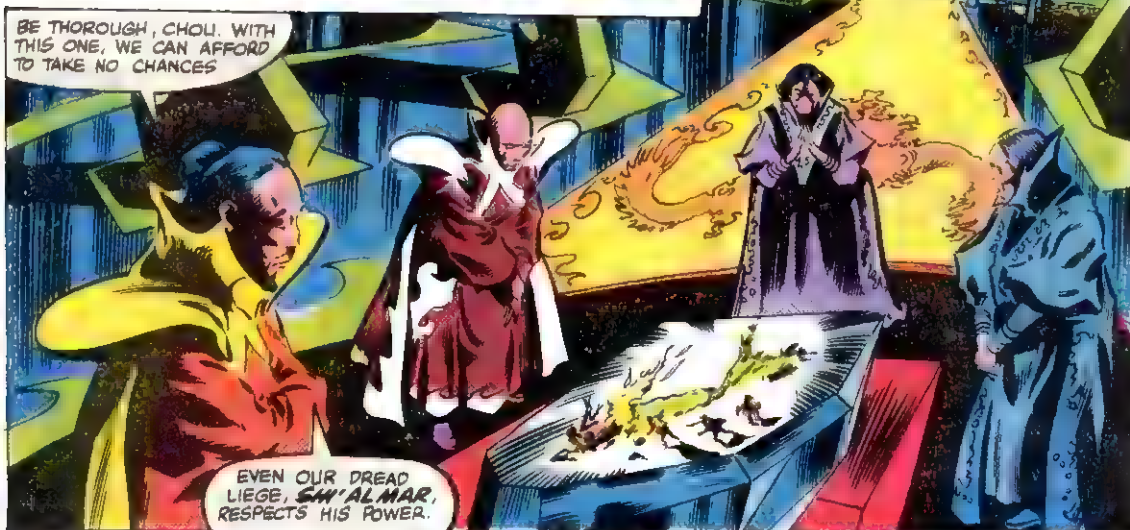
MASTERS, WE HAVE
REACHED DR. STRANGE'S
VEHICLE

AS SOON AS THE FIRE
BURNS ITSELF OUT, WE'LL
SEARCH THE WRECKAGE



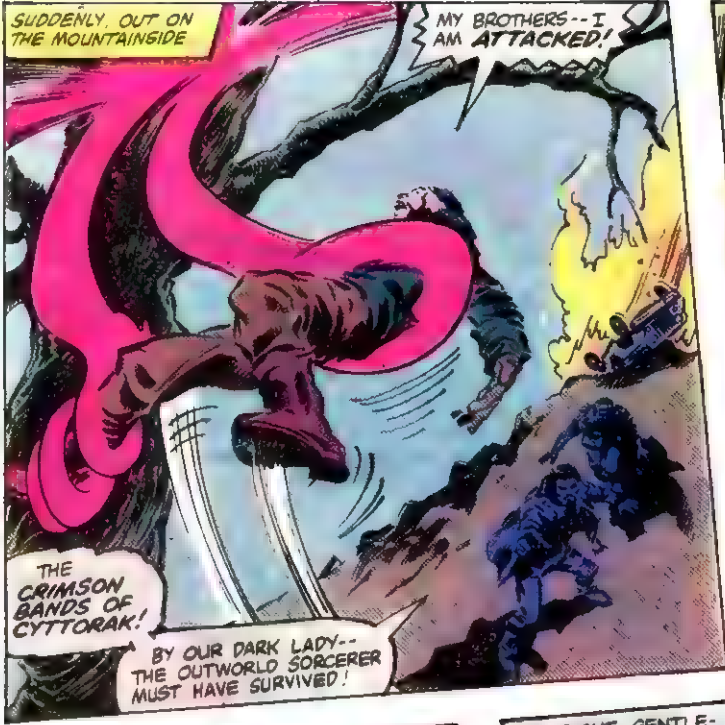
AND, INSIDE THE HILLTOP
MANSION, THERE
STAND FOUR SORCERERS
WHOSE APPEARANCE IS
VAGUELY ORIENTAL--
BUT WHOSE ACCENTS
AND CLOTHING ARE LIKE
NOTHING THAT HAS EVER
APPEARED ON EARTH...

BE THOROUGH, CHOU. WITH
THIS ONE, WE CAN AFFORD
TO TAKE NO CHANCES



EVEN OUR DREAD
LIEGE, **SH'AL MAR**,
RESPECTS HIS POWER.

SUDDENLY, OUT ON THE MOUNTAINSIDE



MY BROTHERS--I AM ATTACKED!

THE CRIMSON BANDS OF CYTTORAK!

BY OUR DARK LADY-- THE OUTWORLD SORCERER MUST HAVE SURVIVED!

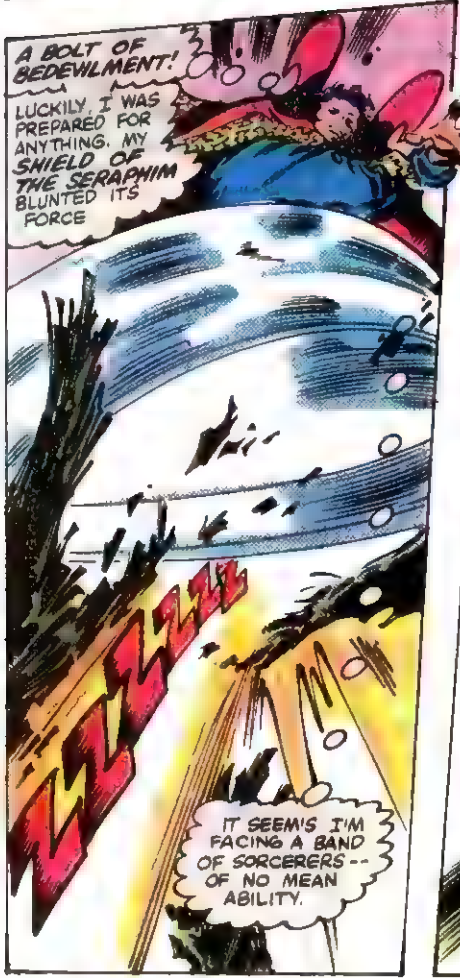
BUT IF HE THINKS WE WARRIORS OF THE GOLDEN DRAGON ARE HELPLESS IN THE FACE OF HIS POWER, HE IS MISTAKEN-- FATALY MISTAKEN!



STRIKE MUNG -- WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH!

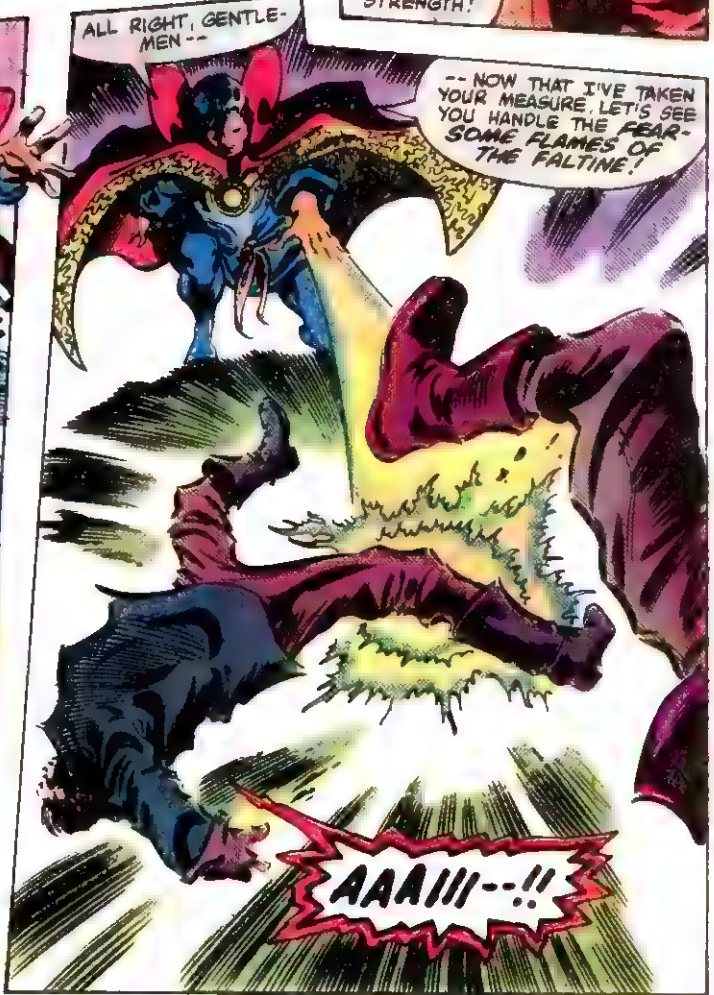
A BOLT OF BEDEVILMENT!

LUCKILY, I WAS PREPARED FOR ANYTHING. MY SHIELD OF THE SERAPHIM BLUNTED ITS FORCE



ALL RIGHT, GENTLE- MEN --

-- NOW THAT I'VE TAKEN YOUR MEASURE, LET'S SEE YOU HANDLE THE FEAR-SOME FLAMES OF THE FALTINE!



IT SEEMS I'M FACING A BAND OF SORCERERS -- OF NO MEAN ABILITY.

AAAIII--!!

LUCK WAS WITH ME
TONIGHT. I WAS
EXPECTING AN
AMBUSH...

... BUT BEING
FORCED OFF A
CLIFF LIKE THAT
WASN'T QUITE WHAT
I HAD IN MIND. MY
CLOAK OF
LEVITATION BARELY
GOT ME OUT OF
THE CAR IN TIME.

FORTUNATELY, MY WOULD-BE MURDERERS POSSESS
ONLY RUDIMENTARY MAGICAL KNOWLEDGE. THEIR
MASTERS-- THE ONES THEY REPORTED TO, MY TRUE
FOES-- MUST BE IN THAT MANSION.

"AND I SUSPECT THEY WON'T BE AS EASILY DEFEATED AS
THEIR SERVANTS."

AT THAT MOMENT, WITHIN THE HOUSE, FOUR
SEEMINGLY HUMAN SORCERERS CLASP HANDS
AROUND THEIR NOW BRIGHTLY-GLOWING
CRYSTAL OF POWER.

... AND OUT THROUGH THE ROOF OF THE
BUILDING.

BY THE
HORRY
HOSTS OF
HOBBOTH!

AS THEY INTONE THEIR DEMONIC SPELL, A
PILLAR OF FIRE EXPLODES UPWARDS FROM
THE HEART OF THE CRYSTAL...

BEFORE THE MAGE'S STARTLED
EYES, THE THOUSAND-FOOT HIGH
COLUMN OF FLAMES TWISTS AND
TURNS LIKE A LIVING THING, THE
INANIMATE FIELD OF ENERGY
QUICKLY COALESCING INTO...

"A-DRAGON!!"

THE BEAST CASTS ABOUT
FOR A MOMENT--GETTING
ITS BEARINGS, GETTING
USED TO BEING ALIVE...

... ITS SINUOUS FORM BOTH
BREATHTAKINGLY BEAUTIFUL
AND TERRIFYING. BUT
THEN, IT CATCHES SIGHT
OF DR. STRANGE--

--AND STRIKES!

IT IS NO ILLUSION--
THAT MUCH IS
CERTAIN!

ITS FLAMES ARE AS
HOT AS A BLAST FURNACE,
INCINERATING EVERYTHING
IN THEIR PATH!

MY COUNTER-SPILLS
AREN'T WORKING. THE
DRAGON IS A CREATURE
OF PURE ENERGY--



-- MAINTAINED BY
THE ARCAINE POWER
OF THE MAGICIANS
WHO CREATED IT. TO
TRULY DEFEAT IT, I
MUST DEFEAT THEM.

BUT TO DO THAT, I MUST
FIRST REACH THEM.

THAT MEANS
GETTING PAST
THE DRAGON.

PERHAPS I
CAN CONFUSE
IT WITH THE
IMAGES OF
IKONN...



NO
GOOD.

FACED
WITH A
THOUSAND
POSSIBLE
TARGETS,
THE
DRAGON
DESTROYS
THEM ALL
SIMULTANE-
OUSLY.



I MUST FIND SOME OTHER WAY
OF FOOLING THE BEAST.

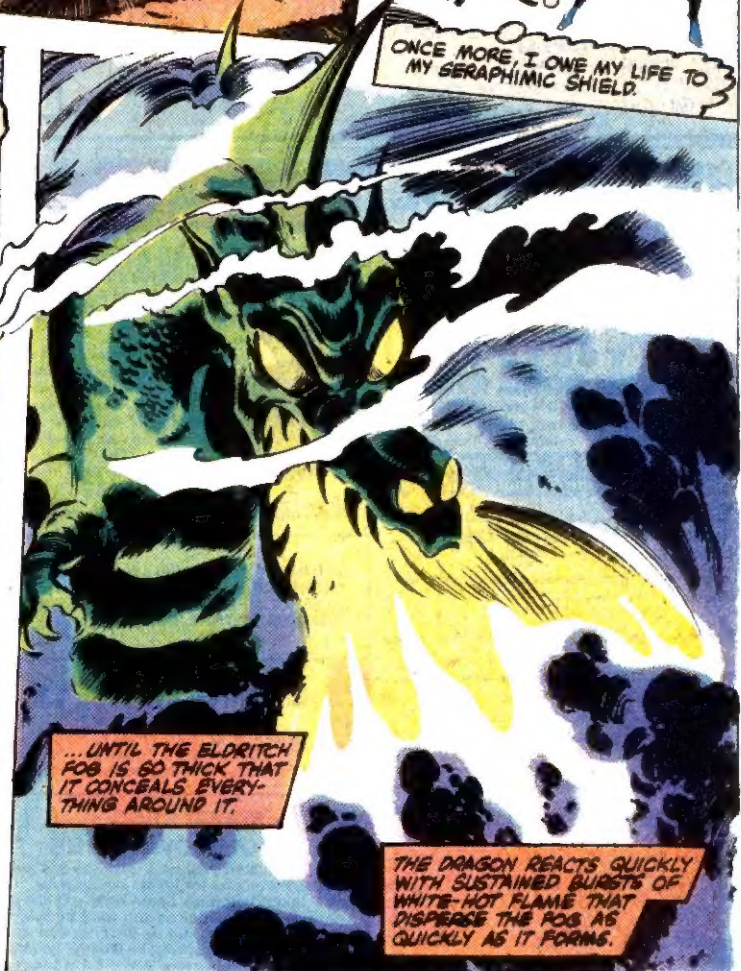
"BY THE VAPORS OF GREAT VALTORR,
WHICH DO ALL THINGS CONCEAL--



"BY THE POWERS OF MY MENTOR--
NOW LET THE CLOUDS CONGEAL!"

MIST BURSTS FROM THE
MAGE'S FINGERS, SORBADING
ACROSS THE VALLEY IN A
TWINKLING OF AN EYE...

ONCE MORE, I OWE MY LIFE TO
MY SERAPHIMIC SHIELD.



...UNTIL THE ELDRITCH
FOG IS SO THICK THAT
IT CONCEALS EVERY-
THING AROUND IT.

THE DRAGON REACTS QUICKLY
WITH SUSTAINED BURSTS OF
WHITE-HOT FLAME THAT
DISPERSE THE FOG AS
QUICKLY AS IT FORMS.

BUT WHEN MUCH OF THE SURROUNDING COUNTRYSIDE HAS BEEN REDUCED TO ASHES--

--DR. STRANGE IS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN.

IT WON'T TAKE MY FOES LONG TO REALIZE WHERE I'VE GONE--THAT I'M IN THEIR OWN HOUSE, SO I MUST ACT QUICKLY!

...AND SEARCH THE HOUSE IN MY ECTO-PLASMIC **ASTRAL FORM**.

I THINK MY BEST MOVE WILL BE TO LEAVE MY BODY IN THIS OUT-OF-THE-WAY LIBRARY...

I'VE NO TIME TO WASTE THOUGH MY SPIRIT-FORM CAN PASS EASILY THROUGH DOORS, WALLS, FLOORS...

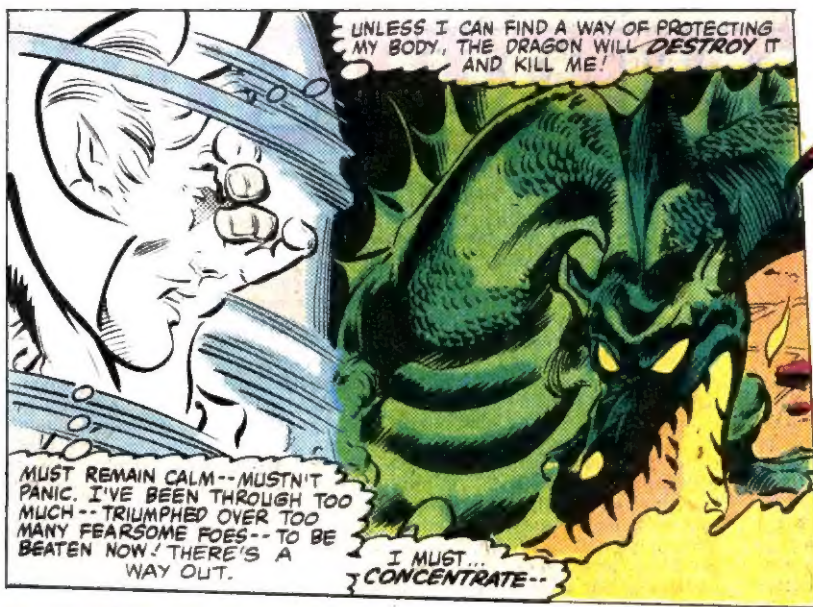
...MY PHYSICAL BODY IS HELPLESS WHEN I LEAVE IT. WHAT--?! THE DRAGON!

IT'S SMALLER BUT IT DOESN'T SEEM ANY LESS POWERFUL. IT'S SMASHING THROUGH THAT CORRIDOR WALL!

IT'S STILL AFTER ME--AND FROM THE WAY IT'S ACTING, IT MUST BE ABLE TO TRACK ME DOWN. THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING--I MUST RETURN TO MY BODY AT ONCE!

DEMONS OF DENAK!

A MYSTIC FORCE FIELD--FORMING IN THE AIR AROUND ME! I'M TRAPPED!



UNLESS I CAN FIND A WAY OF PROTECTING MY BODY, THE DRAGON WILL DESTROY IT AND KILL ME!

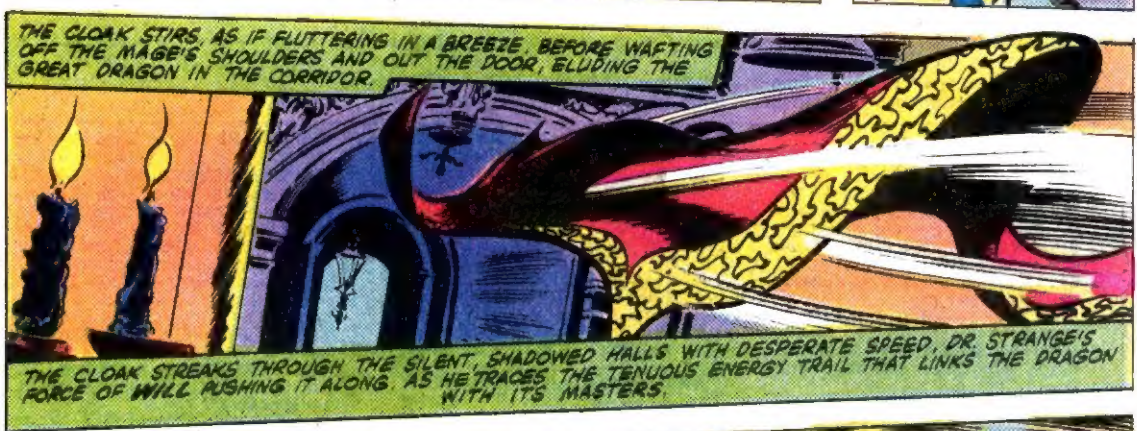
MUST REMAIN CALM-- MUSTN'T PANIC. I'VE BEEN THROUGH TOO MUCH-- TRIUMPHED OVER TOO MANY FEARSOME FOES-- TO BE BEATEN NOW! THERE'S A WAY OUT.

I MUST...
CONCENTRATE--



"--HARD! IT TAKES MUCH MORE EFFORT TO MANIPULATE MY CLOAK WHEN I'M IN MY SPIRIT-FORM.

"BUT MANIPULATE IT I SHALL!"



THE CLOAK STIRS, AS IF FLUTTERING IN A BREEZE, BEFORE WAFTING OFF THE MAGE'S SHOULDERS AND OUT THE DOOR, ELUDING THE GREAT DRAGON IN THE CORRIDOR.

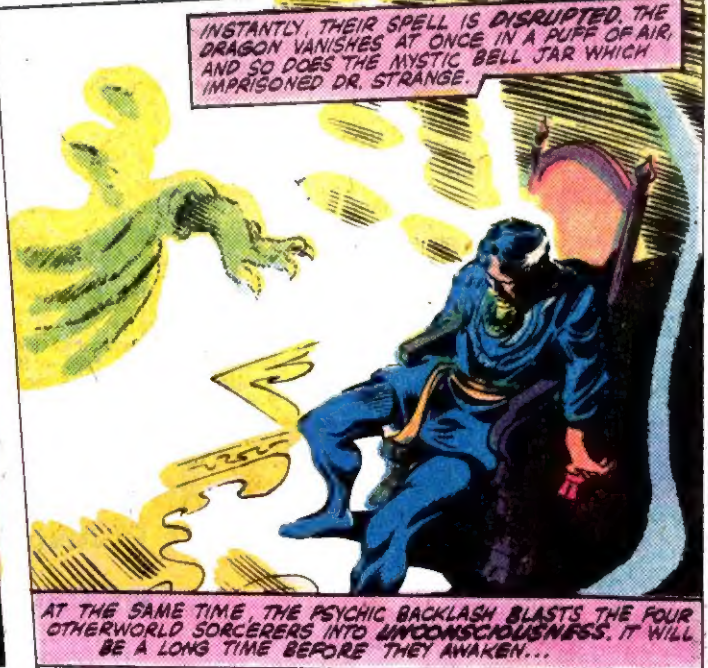
THE CLOAK STREAKS THROUGH THE SILENT, SHADOWED HALLS WITH DESPERATE SPEED. DR. STRANGE'S FORCE OF WILL PUSHING IT ALONG AS HE TRACES THE TENUOUS ENERGY TRAIL THAT LINKS THE DRAGON WITH ITS MASTERS.



THE CLOAK HURTTLES INTO THE ALIEN SORCERERS' CIRCLE LIKE A CANNONBALL...

NO!!

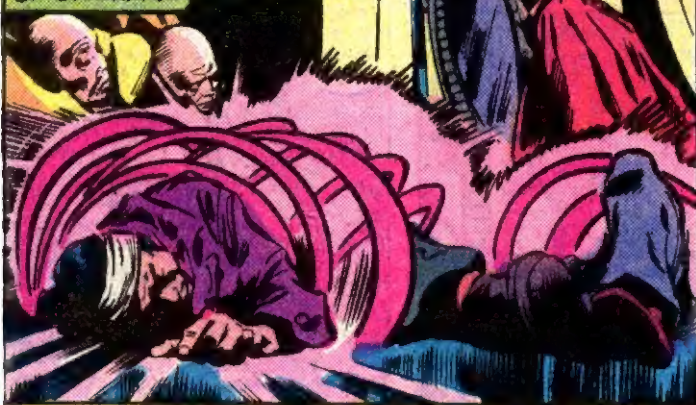
...ENVELOPING ONE OF THEM IN ITS VOLUMINOUS FOLDS, YANKING HIM AWAY FROM HIS FELLOWS-- BREAKING THE CIRCLE!



INSTANTLY, THEIR SPELL IS DISRUPTED. THE DRAGON VANISHES AT ONCE IN A PUFF OF AIR, AND SO DOES THE MYSTIC BELL JAR WHICH IMPRISONED DR. STRANGE.

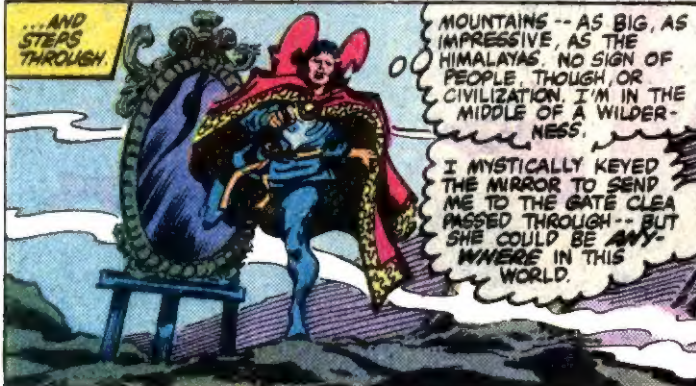
AT THE SAME TIME, THE PSYCHIC BACKLASH BLASTS THE FOUR OTHERWORLD SORCERERS INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS. IT WILL BE A LONG TIME BEFORE THEY AWAKEN...

TO FIND THAT STRANGE HAS BOUND THEM WITH THE VIRTUALLY UNBREAKABLE CRIMSON BANDS OF CYTORRAK.



A SEARCH OF THE HOUSE REVEALS NO SIGN OF EITHER CLEA OR WONG. A LONG, METICULOUS PERUSAL OF THE MAGICIANS' BOOKS AND PAPERS TELLS DR. STRANGE WHERE THEY MIGHT BE.

...AND STEPS THROUGH.



MOUNTAINS--AS BIG, AS IMPRESSIVE, AS THE HIMALAYAS. NO SIGN OF PEOPLE, THOUGH, OR CIVILIZATION. I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF A WILDERNESS.

I MYSTICALLY KEYED THE MIRROR TO SEND ME TO THE GATE CLEA PASSED THROUGH-- BUT SHE COULD BE ANYWHERE IN THIS WORLD.

THE BLACK MIRROR IS A LEGENDARY GATEWAY TO COUNTLESS DIMENSIONS, TO AN INFINITE NUMBER OF ALTERNATE EARTHS. CLEA AND WONG COULD BE ON ANY OF THEM.



WITHOUT HESITATION, DR. STRANGE INVOKES THE SPELL WHICH OPENS THE MIRROR PORTAL...

I'D BETTE--
--URRRGH!



BEFORE DR. STRANGE KNOWS WHAT IS HAPPENING, HE IS SEIZED--

--AND THROWN TO HIS KNEES, UNABLE TO DEFEND HIMSELF...



...AS HIS CLOAK IS TORN BACK, Baring HIS NECK TO THE EXECUTIONER'S AXE.

THE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS IS ABOUT TO DIE-- KNOWING THAT THE WOMAN HE SEEKS, THE WOMAN HE LOVES, STANDS NEARBY, AMONG THE BRIGANDS WHO ARE ABOUT TO KILL HIM.

TO BE CONTINUED!